



Genocide Watch
The Alliance Against Genocide

Country Report: Poland June 2021

In the 2020 Polish presidential elections, [Andrzej Duda](#) of the Law and Justice Party, was re-elected. Poland's conservative nationalist government has used the COVID-19 pandemic to impose restrictions on freedom of expression, the right to protest, and access to asylum.

On July 25, 2020, the government [announced](#) that it will withdraw from the Istanbul Convention, a treaty prohibiting violence against women. [Poland has not yet formally withdrawn.] Poland contends that the treaty's requirement that schools teach children about gender [violates parents' rights](#) to teach their children following their religious traditions. A bill written in place of the treaty is named "Yes to Family, No to Gender." Civil liberties groups [fear that the bill](#) will legalize domestic violence and encourage homophobia.

Public homophobia has made the LGBT+ community feel unsafe. Several towns have taken to [calling themselves 'LGBT free zones'](#). Poland does not legally recognize civil unions. LGBT+ couples cannot adopt children, though single persons can still adopt. In March 2021, the government [proposed closing adoption](#) to all LGBT+ persons.

President Duda has referred to LGBT+ rights as an "ideology" ["more destructive than communism."](#) Minister of Education and Science Przemyslaw Czarnek, has said about [LGBT+ persons](#): "These people aren't equal to normal people." Civil liberties organizations fear that Czarnek will revise the nation's school curriculum to [promote racism and homophobia](#).

Since World War II, Poland has become one of Europe's most ethnically homogeneous societies. Ethnic Poles constitute 97% of the population. Poland has become increasingly [xenophobic](#). During the 2015 refugee crisis, Poland [resisted accepting Muslim refugees](#) and [agreed to accept](#) only 1% of Middle Eastern migrants seeking asylum in Europe. Ukrainian migrants on [whose labor the Polish economy depends](#) have been victims of hate crimes. The Never Again Association has [documented](#) xenophobic incidents against Asian citizens during the COVID-19 pandemic. Antisemitic language was used during election campaigns. Jewish property and cemeteries have been regularly vandalized.

Poland is in denial over its national cooperation with the Holocaust. The state-funded Institute of National Remembrance promotes a denialist version of Polish history under Nazi occupation. A 2018 law made it illegal to [associate the Polish nation with Nazi crimes](#). On Feb. 9, 2021, two historians [were ordered to publicly apologize](#) for labeling certain Polish nationals as Holocaust perpetrators. The head of the Polish League Against Defamation [praised the decision](#), stating, "We don't have to bear the stigma ascribed to us by historians as perpetrators of the Holocaust."

Genocide Watch considers Poland to be at **Stage 3: Discrimination**, **Stage 4: Dehumanization**, and **Stage 6: Polarization** due to legislation that restricts the rights of women and the LGBT+ community. Poland is also at **Stage 10: Denial** concerning Polish cooperation with the Holocaust.

Genocide Watch recommends:

- Poland should not withdraw from the Istanbul Convention that protects women's rights.
- Poland should abide by the EU LGBTIQ Freedom Zone Resolution (2021).
- Poland should protect the civil rights of LGBT+ persons, including the right to adopt children.
- Poland's education curriculum must oppose, rather than promote, xenophobia and homophobia.
- Poland should recognize the dual role of Poles as both victims and participants in the Holocaust.
- Polish government funding must not go to organizations that promote Holocaust revisionism.